(c) The current rate of import duty on cotton is 10 per cent. The import duty on cotton is decided on the basis of the need to protect domestic producers and also to make available raw material to users at reasonable prices.

Testing of Coca Cola as pesticide

†473. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 844 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 10th December, 2004 and state:

(a) whether Government have carried out any scientific tests with regard to spraying coca cola and pepsi on crops to kill harmful insects to ascertain as to what extent such spraying is successful on crops, and

(b) if not, the reasons for not carrying out scientific tests on such spraying and the reasons for delay in the said tests?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) No, Sir. Scientists of the Agriculture Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh have advised the farmers against spraying of crops with cola drinks since would neither be economical nor useful. Hence no scientific tests/trials were carried out in this regard.

Withdrawal of Insurance Schemes

†474. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to withdraw crops Insurance Scheme and National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (N.A.I.S.) 'Farm Income Insurance Scheme', 'Rain Insurance Scheme' etc;

(b) if so, the reasons for withdrawing the same;

(c) if not, whether these schemes are being amended; and

(d) if so, the details of the proposed amendments?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) is under implementation since Rabi 1999-2000 in the country and the same in continuing at present. A Pilot Project on Farm Income Insurance Scheme (FIIS) was launched in Rabi 2003-04 and Kharif 2004 seasons in the selected districts/States. But based on the findings on the Concurrent Evaluation Study undertaken by an independent agency and the recommendations of the Joint Group constituted to study the improvements required in the existing Crop Insurance Schemes, it has been discontinued with effect from rabi 2004-05 season. Some general insurance companies are implementing Rainfall Insurance Schemes on their own.

(c) and (d) A Joint Group was constituted by the Government to suggest the improvements required in the crop insurance schemes. The Joint Group has since submitted its report and the Government is consulting Stakeholders regarding these recommendations.

Closing the Kisan Call Centres

†475. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have closed the Kisan Call Centres providing agriculture related information;

(b) if so, the reasons for closing these centres;

(c) whether Government have made any alternative arrangement for providing information related to agriculture; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) do not arise.

Crop Loss in Vidarbha

476. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.